

PEOPLE & THINGS

I HAVE some sympathy with those persons who, when raised to the peerage, prefer to keep to the name by which they have been known for fifty or sixty or seventy years. A new name may, of course, be the prelude to a new career; but an old name is like an old passport—nobody really likes to part with it.

Of the four new peers created in the Birthday Honours List, Mr. Malcolm McCorquodale alone is still a commoner. I hear that this unusual delay is due to a caveat entered by Lyon King of Arms, who, hearing that Mr. McCorquodale wished to be plain Lord McCorquodale, felt bound to object. There is, he pointed out, a clan McCorquodale; and if this clan should appoint a chieftain he will be known simply as the McCorquodale and will sign with his surname alone.

Lyon took this same course when Sir Harold Mackintosh, of National Savings fame, became Lord Mackintosh of Halifax. And so, I am told, Mr. McCorquodale has yielded to Lyon's wish, and will in due course sign himself McCorquodale of Newton.

London Bookman

IT is a year or two now since members of the London Library had need to brace themselves, on pushing open the double swing doors in St. James's Square, to meet the gaze, at once bland and accusatory, of Mr. Frederick Cox. This beelining near-nogonarian retired soon after completing seventy years' work. But nobody who ever knew him is likely to forget that white-haired, bulky, crab-like guardian of the gates of learning; and the news yesterday of his death must bring a pang of real regret to many who were rather frightened of him during his reign.

He joined the library in 1882, and conducted the eminent by candle-lantern to the remotest shelves, then salty with the tang of Messrs. Fortnum and Mason's adjacent stables. As the years rolled past scholar succeeded scholar and war succeeded war, but Mr. Cox remained at his post.

Among members he undeniably had his favourites, and to the end he remained rather severe towards the ladies; I myself once blushed hotly as, in my presence, he studiously ignored the overtures of our greatest living poetess. But his immense knowledge was widely exercised, and no other man in this century—with the possible exception of the late Sir Edward Marsh—was so often and so sincerely thanked in forewords to works of scholarship. That is his well-earned memorial.

An Exemplary Majority

THE doyen of British Commonwealth representatives in London completes, this month, his twenty-first year of office. Mr. W. A. McAdam has been Agent-General for British Columbia since 1934, and before that was for eleven years official secretary in the same department.

Mr. McAdam is to be congratulated not only upon the length of his service but upon the exemplary efficiency of its organisation. British Columbia House, No. 1, Regent Street, costs its taxpayers nothing: offices, salaries, running costs and official hospitality are all paid for out of the rents of the seventy other offices which go to make up the building.

The Agent-General plays host to

By ATTICUS

more than 2,000 British Columbians every year; but he is equally assiduous in fostering British interests in Canada, and I know that one of his ambitions is to see the restoration of tourist travel in Canada—if possible before 1958, for in that year British Columbia will be *en fête* to mark the centenary of its establishment as a Crown Colony.

A New Arrival

AMONG the sounds which the perceptive Londoner has learnt to recognise, this broiling summer, is the footfall of the visiting American humorist.

Mr. James Thurber, it is true, has left London, and is now studying the history of the Loch Ness monster from the security of the Hotel Continental in Paris. Mr. E. B. White has also left, but will be back; and the relay is now being carried on by Mr. S. J. Perelman, who is known to grate-



S. J. PERELMAN

ful readers for his "Round the World in Eighty Clichés" and to historians of the cinema for his considerable hand in the films made by the Marx Brothers.

Mr. Perelman is a cat-footed, moth-voiced man of indecipherable age. Though he invented, with Groucho Marx, what might be called a new degree of rudeness, he is himself the pattern of New England courtesy.

The immediate object of his visit is to work on the new film version of Jules Verne's "Round the World in Eighty Days." Mr. Perelman is no slapdash adapter; for example he has just lunched at the Reform Club in order to savour, in all its actuality, the scene of Phileas Fogg's fatal wager. The club's ice is no longer brought, as Verne stated, "at great cost from the American lakes"; nor is it customary for members to accompany their "steak and royal British sauce" with "several cups of excellent tea"; but in other respects the club fulfilled all Mr. Perelman's expectations. "Frank Lloyd Wright admires it, too," he said, as if to forestall a charge of antiquarianism.

Situation Vacant

MR. PERELMAN'S own humour, with its neatness, rapidity and high verbal polish, is like nothing in our literature; but his interest in English buffoons is disarmingly comrehensive. From Anstey (whose "Tinted Venus" he once adapted as a musical comedy) to Ealing comedies and the re-

animated "Punch," he scrutinises everything with the same sensitive eyebrow and consummately ironical eye. He considers that the prospect has never been brighter for anyone who can be funny regularly and in print. "Even the 'New Yorker' can't get enough," he assured me.

Geographer Extraordinary

VERNE'S novel exemplifies the nineteenth-century belief in the magic properties of a journey round the world. To M. André Siegfried, who made the trip in 1898, and today celebrates his eightieth birthday, it provided the inspiration for a form of studies which M. Siegfried has made peculiarly his own: the geography of history.

M. Siegfried is the most versatile of living historians. His first book was on democracy in New Zealand; his knowledge of Britain, Canada and the United States would put most Englishmen to shame; and he did not disdain in his seventies, to publish certain studies which, had he been younger, would have earned him a name for frivolity. (I remember for example, a rare and costly pamphlet in which the social geography of Paris was considered with particular reference to the density of Dukes. . . .)

M. Siegfried has also a wide reputation as an epigrammatist. He once rebuked a young man for revealing too openly his dislike of a contemporary: "If you want to harm him," said M. Siegfried, "don't speak ill of him. Say too much good about him."

Three Disagreeable Weeks

AT noon today the starting signal will be given for what is beyond question the most arduous event in the world's motor-sports calendar. The Australian Redex Reliability Trials lasts for twenty-one days and nights (with only twelve scheduled stops of eight hours or more) and covers more than 10,000 miles of largely detestable country.

From my colleague Arthur Morley, who will himself be a competitor, I learn that every one of the 182 competing vehicles must be a standard production model ("We're not even allowed to fix kangaroo guards," he adds, with rare pathos.)

Entrants must however carry a compass, for use in the all-but-pathless Kimberley cattle country; a week's supply of food and water; a winch and tackle for use when stranded in bog or river-bed, and an axe with which to chop themselves out of the wreckage. They must prepare for many possibilities: unseen boulders may break their axles in the "horror" roads of the outback; they may be drowned in one of the twenty-eight creeks that garnish one short section of the route; dried grasses may wrap themselves round the exhaust pipe and burn them to death almost before they notice the change of temperature. And when at last they turn in to sleep their only bed will be a hip-hole in the ground.

The desert, the sand, the mountains, and the unbridged rivers form an obstacle race in which the first prize is much more than the nominal £2,000. Australia is an important export market; the Rally excites intense interest and raving discussion; and this year British manufacturers are making an all-out attempt to win the coveted first prize.

I'll stick to Monte Carlo myself